

IN THE CLAIMS

Cancel claims 1 through 20 and in their place add the following new claims 21 through 28:

21. An anchoring device for joining three boards, which comprises:

(a) a substantially flat horizontal top element having a top view configuration which includes two sides and has a first predetermined width as measured side to side, said first predetermined width being measured at a maximum width between said two sides, said top element having an imaginary center line;

(b) at least one substantially vertical support member attached to an underside of said top element along said imaginary center line of said top element and extending downwardly therefrom for a predetermined length, said substantially vertical support member having two sides and a second predetermined width as measured side to side at a maximum width; and,

(c) a substantially flat horizontal bottom element having a flat bottom view configuration which includes two sides and having a generally trapezoidal shape, and having a third predetermined width as measured side to side at a maximum width at a trapezoidal base;

wherein said first predetermined width is greater than both said second predetermined width and third predetermined width, and wherein said third predetermined width is greater than said second predetermined width, and said

anchoring device is adapted to maintain said top element in a predetermined position during use for joinder of two adjacent boards which have been pre-cut with receiving slots, and to position said bottom element upon a support board which said two adjacent boards rest for attachment of said anchoring device to said support board for anchoring and support of said two adjacent boards.

22. The anchoring device of claim 21 wherein said vertical support member has a plurality of recesses with support columns located therebetween.

23. The anchoring device of claim 21 wherein said device is made of molded plastic material capable of having a metal fastener driven through.

24. A decking system which comprises:

I. a plurality of decking boards, each decking board having a top, a bottom, two sides, and two ends, and at least one groove located along one of said sides, said groove adapted to receive an anchoring device; and

II. an anchoring device which comprises:

(a) a substantially flat horizontal top element having a top view configuration which includes two sides and has a first predetermined width as measured side to side, said first predetermined width being measured a maximum width between said sides, said top element having an imaginary center line;

(b) at least one substantially vertical support member attached to an underside of said top element along said imaginary center line of said top element

and extending downwardly therefrom for a predetermined length, said substantially vertical support member having two sides and a second predetermined width as measured side to side at its maximum width; and

(c) a substantially flat horizontal bottom element having a flat bottom view configuration which includes two sides and having a generally trapezoidal shape, and having a third predetermined width as measured side to side at its maximum width at a trapezoidal base;

wherein said first predetermined width is greater than both said second predetermined width and third predetermined width, and wherein said third predetermined width is greater than said second predetermined width, and said anchoring device is adapted to maintain said top element in a predetermined position during use for joinder of two adjacent boards which have been pre-cut with receiving slots, and to position said bottom element upon a support board which said two adjacent boards rest for attachment of said anchoring device to said support board for anchoring and support of said two adjacent boards.

25. The decking system of claim 24 wherein said vertical support member of said anchoring device has a plurality of recesses with support columns located therebetween.

26. The decking system of claim 24 wherein said device is made of molded plastic material capable of having a metal fastener driven through.

27. The decking system of claim 24 wherein said groove establishes an upper half of each said board above said groove and a lower half of each said board below said groove, wherein said upper half has a greater width than said lower half.

28. The decking system of claim 24 wherein said plurality of decking boards are made of materials selected from the group consisting of synthetic polymers, at least partially foamed synthetic polymers, wood, wood composite, and combinations thereof.